CALIBER PRESS

NEGATIVE BURN

an anthology

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NEGATIVE BURN

VOLUME ONE
NUMBER EIGHT

an anthology
Joe Pruett /Editor

P.O. Box 672162, Marietta, GA 30067-0037

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illustrated by Casey Jones and Scott Multer

ERL KING ..... Back Cover
written and illustrated by P. Craig Russell

Cover Art by James A. Owen

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH MAD HATTER STUDIOS INTERNATIONAL

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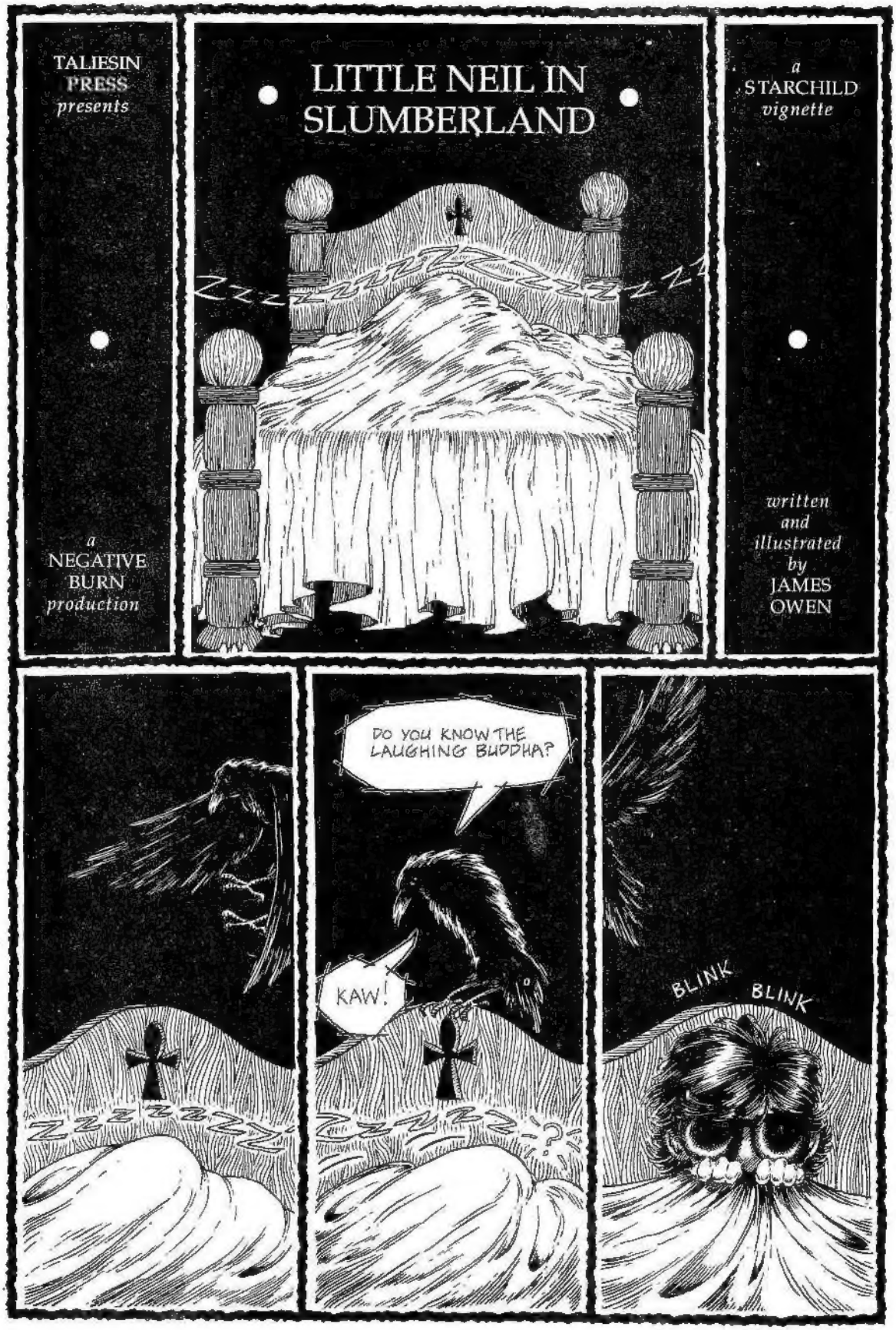
TALIESIN PRESS presents
a NEGATIVE BURN production
LITTLE NEIL IN SLUMBERLAND
Zzzzzzzzzzzzz
a STARCHILD vignette
written and illustrated by JAMES OWEN
Zzzzzzzz
DO YOU KNOW THE LAUGHING BUDDHA?
KAW!
Zzzzzz-?
BLINK
BLINK

WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL
SO MANY TO CHOOSE FROM
SUCH AN IMAGINATION.
SO MANY BEAUTIFUL STORIES.
BEAUTIFUL
BRINGS A TEAR TO OLD TOM'S EYES.
HEY! DON'T STACK THOSE UP THERE!
SORRY, MR. CEREBUS.
SERBIUS. TH' NAME IS SERBIUS.
RIGHT-O CEREBRIUS.
SIGH
WHERE ARE THE NOVELS?
OVER THERE — NEXT TO THE NIGHTSHIRT WITH THE LITTLE HEARTS ON IT.
ANKHS.
WHATEVER.
NOW, LET ME SEE... NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, ESSAYS, MISCELLANIA...
HEAVENS TO BETSY!
WHERE ARE THE WITTY RETORTS?
OVER THERE
OH MY...
BRING A SHOVEL.

AH, EXCUSE ME...
?
OH, POOP. HE'S AWAKE.
UH, TOM? WE GOT T-R-U-B-L.
TROUBLE? INDEED, NO.
NOT TROUBLE, BUT AN HONOR.
YES, A FINE HONOR, THAT.
HERE NOW, YOU RASCALS.
WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?
WHY, WE'RE UPDATING YOUR CATALOG.
DO YOU MIND?
ER... CATALOGUE?

...OF YOUR DREAMS. YOU SEE, I'M NOT REALLY HERE.
IT'S ALL A DREAM.
PULL THE OTHER ONE.
NO, REALLY!
SHOW HIM, SERBIUS.
SHORE THING.
KA-POW!
SEE... IF THIS WASN'T A DREAM, MARTIN WOULD HAVE BEEN HURT.
RIGHT ENOUGH.
SHOOT— BROKE MY SEEGAR.
BUT, A QUESTION: WHY THE INTEREST IN MY DREAMS?
WHY, BECAUSE THEY'RE THE BEST.
YOUR DREAMS, YOUR STORIES...
...INSPIRE ALL WHO COME BEFORE AND AFTER.

WHY THE VERY NAME OF OSCAR WILDE IS BELOVED AROUND THE WORLD.
OSCAR WHO?
. . .
AREN'T YOU OSCAR WILDE?
ER...
..NO.
OH, DEAR.
WE'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!
WE'RE TERRIBLY SORRY— AREN'T WE?
. . . .
SMACK
SORRY SORRY SORRY SORRY SORRY
SORRY.
EVERYBODY OUT!
SLAM

WELL. WASN'T THAT EXCITING!
YAWN
DO YOU KNOW THE LAUGHING BUDDHA?
KAW!
ZZZZZZZZ

THE END

The autumn leaves have begun to blow.
Thunder rolls low and deep in the night,
as grey mists choke silent the moonlight.
The storm crescendos to a fury,
as a horn is sounded,
and the wild hunt is begun...

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WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES A. OWEN
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MR. MAMOULIAN

DICK-HEAD

LOOK, STEVE I DON'T WANT TO BE CALLED SHIT-FACE ANY MORE
WHY NOT ? WHAT'S WRONG WITH SHIT-FACE ?
I DUNNO... JUST CALL ME EVELIN. IT IS MY NAME
I CAN'T FUCKING CALL YOU EVELIN. THAT'S A FUCKING WALLY NAME!
WELL I CALL YOU STEVE, DON'T I ?
STEVE'S OKAY EVELIN ISN'T!
THAT'S NOT SUCH A TERRIFIC NAME
SAYS WHO ?
WHO DECIDES WHATS AN OKAY NAME AND WHAT'S NOT AN OKAY NAME?
NOW LISTEN! IF THERE'S ONE THING I'M FUCKING NOT DOING IT'S HANGING AROUND WITH SOMEONE CALLED EVELIN!
EVELIN SOUNDS LIKE A FUCKING SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER!
OR A FUCKING YUPPIE OR SOMETHING!
OKAY, SO I'LL START CALLING YOU DICK-HEAD
YOU WATCH YOUR FUCKING MOUTH!!

BONESHAKER III

WHAT'S THIS FOR?
A GAUGE.
YOUR EXPLANATION OF EARTHLY LIE AND (STANDBY) EXAGGERATION UNFOUND US.
OUR CONCLUSION ON YOUR SUPERIOR (STANDBY) PHYSICAL STRENGTH IS UNMADE.
WE MUST NOW GAUGE.
SO...
SO HOW?
STRIKE IT.
THAT'S A... THAT'S A ROCK.
YES, YOU STRIKE IT NOW... WE GAUGE YOU.

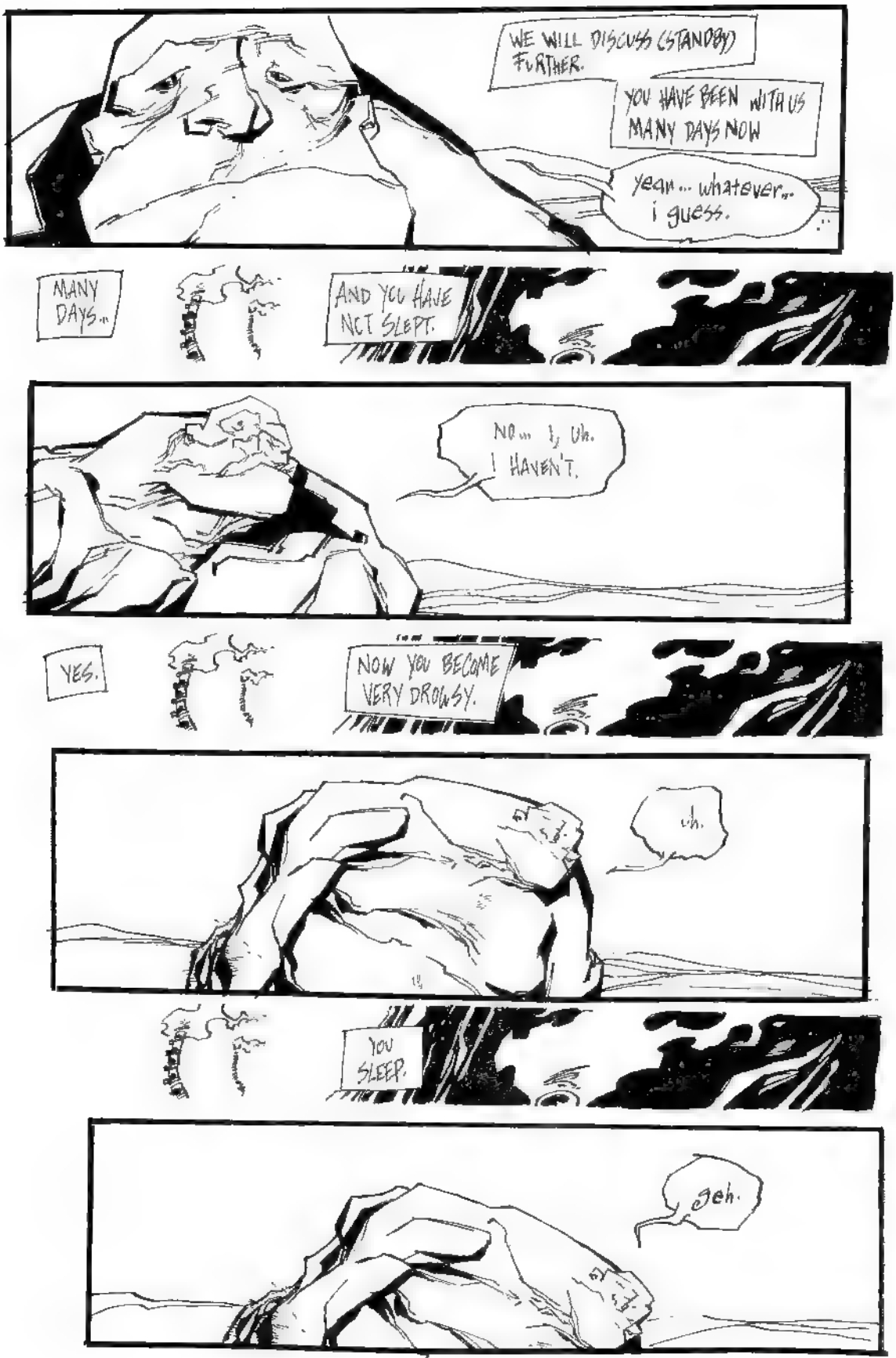
IT'S LIKE A PUNCHING BAG or A DUMMY. SO, WHY'S IT LOOK LIKE ME?
REGRETS
YOU ARE OUR ONLY MODEL.
Uh-huh... so, I—
STRIKE IT.
BUT IT'S A ROCK!
(STANDBY) THIS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED.
STRIKE
NOW.

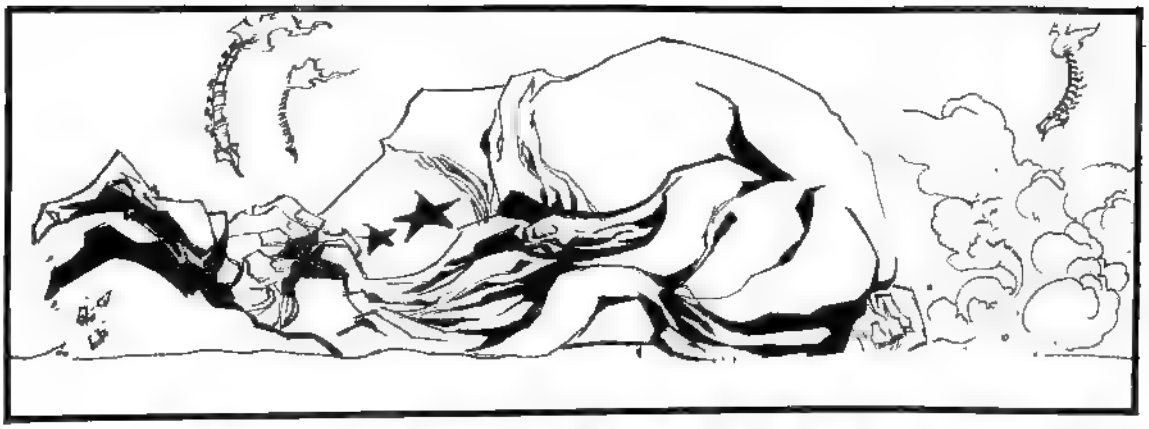
nmp... I MAY NOT BE THE STRONGEST GUY ON EARTH,
BUT I AM THE STRONGEST GUY.
HERE.

THIS IS GREAT!
HAW!
I'M SMASHIN' 'EM LIKE SALTINES!

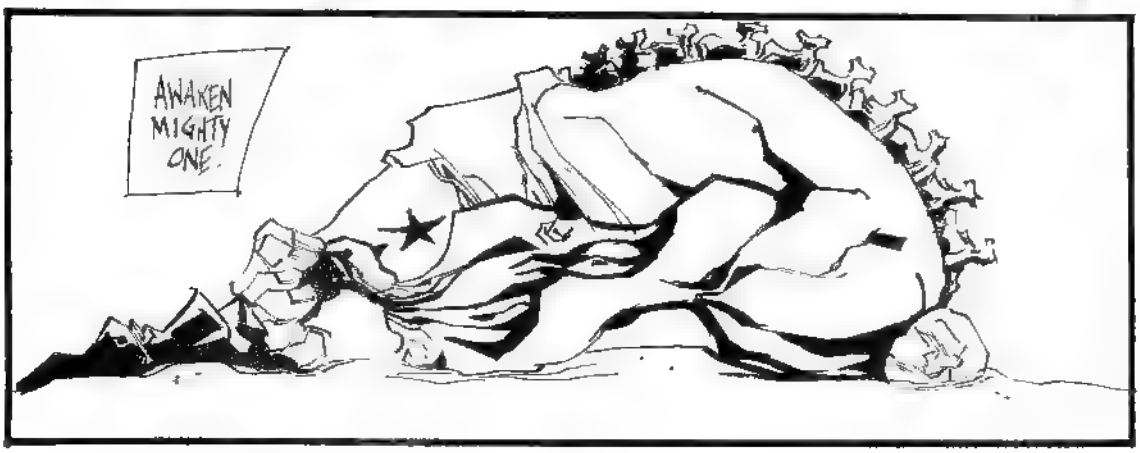
YES. YOUR STRENGTH IS SUFFICIENT TO FULFILL OUR REQUEST FOR VIOLENCE
Uh.. Listen
WE WILL DETAIL OUR NEEDS.
WE ARE A (STANDBY).. CONTINUUM. BUT ONE AMONG US HAS BECOME SEPARATE. YOU COMPREHEND?
YEAH. ONE O' YOUSE SPLIT OFF. WENT HIS OWN WAY.
YES. IT LESSENS THE WHOLE. IT DIMINISHES THE GROUP. THIS WE CANNOT ABIDE. SO ONCE AGAIN, WE HUMBLY ASK THE MIGHTY BONESHAKER TO BRING VIOLENCE
BRING VIOLENCE TO (STANDBY)... THE ONE APART.
BRING VIOLENCE LIKE WHAT?
DESTRUCTION. (STANDBY)... ANNIHILATION.
HOLD IT. KILL HIM?
YES

HOLD IT. HOLD ON.
Listen, CRACKED PLENTY O' HEADS IN MY TIME, BUT...
Y'KNOW, I NEVER KILLED NO BODY.'
HELL, I DON'T EVEN KILL BUGS. I CATCH THE THINGS AND LET 'EM GO OUTSIDE.
THE ONLY THING I EVER TRIED TO KILL WAS MYSELF AND I EVEN SCREWED THAT UP
WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND.
WE ARE BEWILDERED. YOU POSSESS THE SKILLS AND POWER,
BUT YOU CANNOT KILL?
I WON'T.
I CAN'T.
(STANDBY)... YOU REFUSE?
Yeah.


WE WILL DISCUSS (STANDBY) FURTHER.
YOU HAVE BEEN WITH US MANY DAYS NOW
yeah... whatever.. i guess.
MANY DAYS...
AND YOU HAVE NOT SLEPT.
NO... I, Uh. I HAVEN'T.
YES.
NOW YOU BECOME VERY DROWSY.
uh.
YOU SLEEP.
Jeh.



AWAKEN.

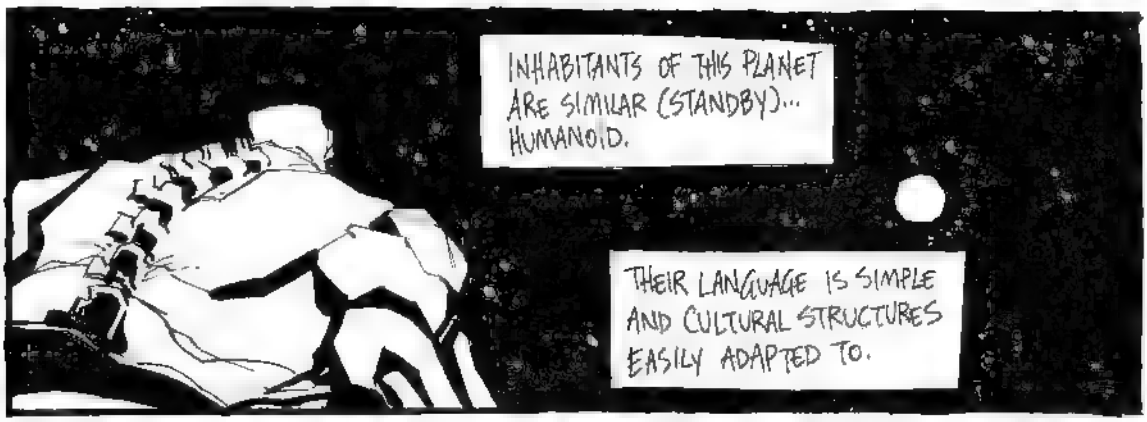

AWAKEN MIGHTY ONE.

huuu
HOLY SHIT!
I'M FLOATIN'! JEEZIS CRIMINY!

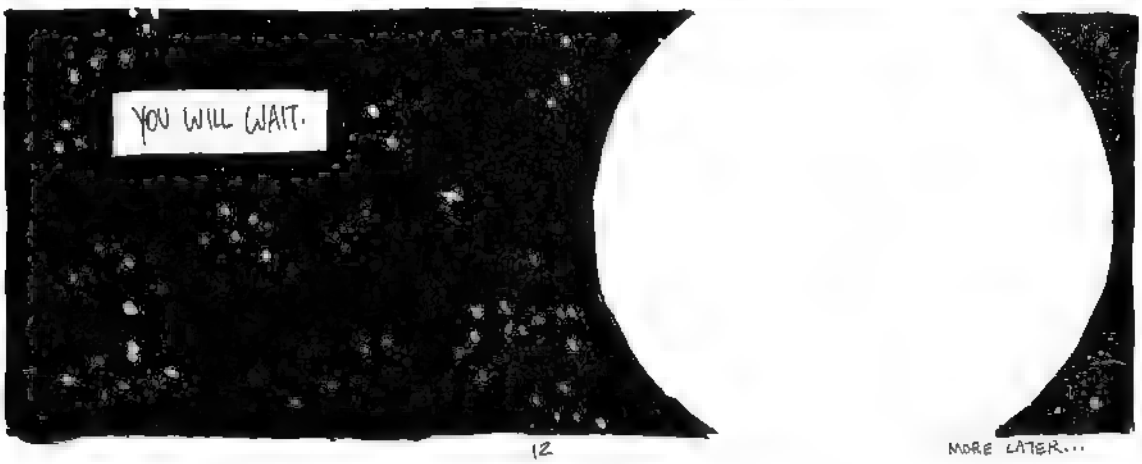
REMAIN CALM.
ONE OF OUR CONTINUUM HAS JOINED WITH THE BONESHAKER.
WHY? WHAT FOR?
YOUR REFUSAL TO AID US IS CONFUSING... WE ARE UNSURE HOW TO (STANDBY)... PROCEED.
THE ONE JOINED WITH YOU WILL ALLOW YOU TO MOVE ABOUT THE UNIVERSE WITHOUT OUR HELP.
JESUS H.!
THIS ONE HAS BEEN (STANDBY)... IMPAIRED SINCE HIS INCEPTION. IT'S FLAME BURNS WEAK AND DULL. NO THOUGHTS.
IT WILL SERVE YOU WELL.

WHAT'S GOIN' ON? WHY CAN'T YOU TAKE ME HOME?
YOU WILL NOT AID US.
WE WILL NOT AID YOU.
YOU MUST LEAVE US NOW.
WE MUST (STANDBY) ... RETHINK OUR STRATEGY

YOU MAY NOT RETURN "HOME" UNTIL YOU DECIDE TO AID US.
IN THAT TIME YOU MAY WISH TO TRAVEL TO THE QUIET PLANET.


INHABITANTS OF THIS PLANET ARE SIMILAR (STANDBY)... HUMANOID.
THEIR LANGUAGE IS SIMPLE AND CULTURAL STRUCTURES EASILY ADAPTED TO.

YOU WILL BE SET APART.


YOU WILL WAIT.

MORE LATER...

CLASSICS DESECRATED

THE GRISLYCOCK AND JUNO

DEFILED BY DOUG WHEELER + JIM WHEELOCK

...PONATNIE THERE EXISTED AN ABOMINABLE AND BLASPHEMOUS [illegible] BEAST KNOWN AS THE GRISLYCOCK
THIS CREATURE HAD SCALES MADE OF COCKROACH SHELLS THE OIL-SOAKED FEATHERS OF EXXON-CLEANED SEAGULLS THE FEET OF MY GRANDMOTHER THE FASHION TASTES OF CHER, AND FOR ITS MOST REPULSIVE FEATURE, THE VOICE AND FACE OF RUSH LIMBAUGH.
IT LEFT A TRAIL OF SLIME WHEREEVER IT WALKED, AND IT WAS SAID THAT NOT EVEN MEDUSA COULD LOOK UPON IT WITHOUT BECOMING NAUSEATED.
...AND YET, FOR ALL ITS GLORIOUS HIDEOUSNESS, IT WAS STILL NOT HAPPY
DESIRING TO INCREASE THEIR ABHORRENT NATURE, THE GRISLYCOCKS ONE DAY PETITIONED JUNO TO GRANT THEM THE NOXIOUS SMELL OF TWENTY MEPHITIKS...
...WHICH JUNO, WISHING TO REMOVE THE FOUL BEASTS FROM HER SIGHT, GRANTED THEM...
R.I.P. GRISLYCOCK
...THUS MAKING THEM SO EXQUISITELY DISAGREEABLE THAT THEY COULD NO LONGER TOLERATE EVEN EACH OTHER, AND SO BECAME EXTINCT.

MORAL: "BE HAPPY IN YOUR REPULSIVE QUALITIES, NOT COVETING THOSE OF OTHERS."

CLASSICS
RESECRATED
DEFILED BY DOUG WHEELER AND BRIAN CLOPPER
THE LAWYER
A LAWYER, PURSUED BY AN ANGRY MOB, WAS ATTEMPTING TO SLIP OUT OF TOWN AND ESCAPE ACROSS ITS RIVER...
BURN HIM!
HE TURNED ME INTO A NEWT!
GRRR!
...WHEN HE RAN INTO A PACK OF WOLVES, AND SO CLIMBED A TREE TO HIDE IN.
THISS
SEEING A POISONOUS SNAKE SLITHERING TOWARDS HIM, HE CRAWLED FURTHER OUT TOWARDS THE END OF ONE BRANCH...
GRR!
...WHEREUPON HE FELL INTO THE RIVER, AND WAS TORN TO SHREDS BY STARVING CROCODILES.
MORAL: " JUSTICE PREVAILS IN THE END."

CLASSICS DESECRATED™

Aesop & The Farmer

UPDATED BY DOUG WHEELER & MAC MYERS

A CERTAIN FARMER WHO RAISED SHEEP FOUND HIS EWES GIVING BIRTH TO LAMBS WITH HUMAN HEADS.
ALARMED, THE FARMER CALLED SEVERAL PSYCHIC HOTLINES FOR ADVICE...
HAVE ANY OF YOUR SHEEP BEEN TO MY BROTHER MICHAEL'S RANCH?
IT IS AN OMEN THAT YOUR WIFE WILL HAVE AN AFFAIR WITH A FAMOUS T.V. EVANGELIST!
uh, MAY I HAVE HER ADDRESS?
HOUR OF POWER
FINALLY, THE FARMER BROUGHT HIS SHEEP ONTO A TALK SHOW, AT WHICH AESOP HAPPENED TO BE AMONGST THE AUDIENCE, AND HE LEARNED THE TRUE ANSWER AT LAST...
IF YOU WISH TO AVOID MORE OF THESE MUTANT CREATURES, GIVE YOUR SHEPHERDS WIVES.
MACMYERS

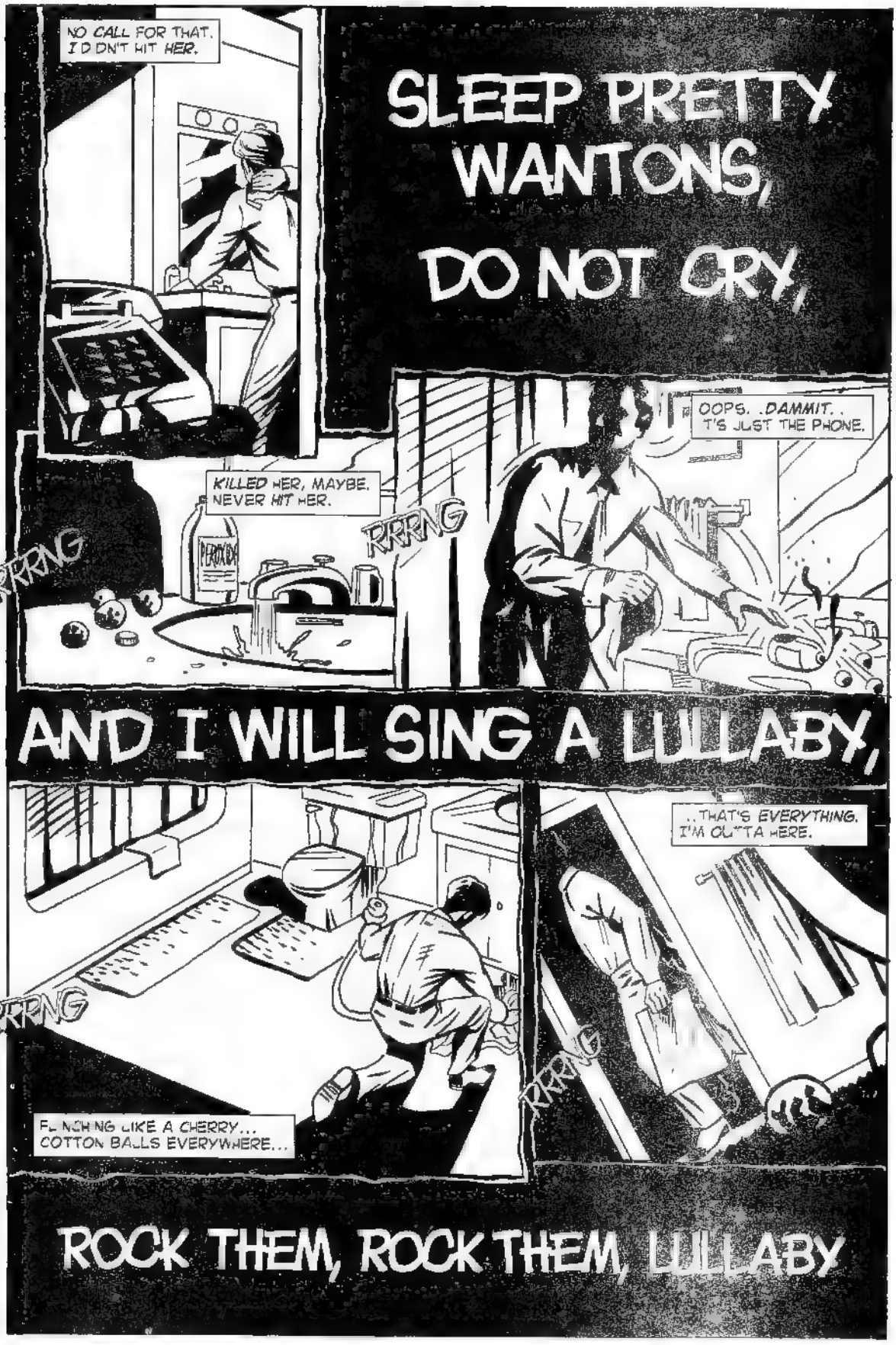
MORAL: LOVE WILL FIND A WAY.

GOD, I WISH I COULD SLEEP.
IT'S BEEN THREE WEEKS, NOW (ONLY THREE?)--
NO NAPS, DOZING...NADA.
FEEL LIKE A WORN OUT STRETCH BAXTER DOLL.
RAMONES
REMEMBER THAT TOY? STRETCH THE CRAP OUT OF IT AND IT'D ALWAYS COME BACK INTO SHAPE.
NOT ME.
...STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT
...A LULLABY PREVIEW

AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO DIE WITHOUT SLEEP AFTER A WHILE?
IT'S NOT NATURAL. INSOMNIACS GOTTA SLEEP SOMETIMES...RIGHT?
Blue Velvet
ALL BECAUSE OF THE BAND. THE BREAKUP.
FUNNY HOW YOU CAN WANT SOMETHING SO BAD UNTIL YOU ACTUALLY GET IT...
BLUE VELVET SLATED FOR LOLLAPALOOZA!
ALMOST LIKE "GETTING THERE" IS THE REAL RUSH, THE ANTICIPATION...THE MYSTERY...LIKE GOOD SEX--
CRAWLING FREE
CAREER INTERRUPTUS: BLUE VELVET CALLS IT QUITS
by Kurt Kaplan
--OR CHRISTMAS MORNING...

I COULD NEVER SLEEP THE NIGHT BEFORE--ALWAYS TOO WIRED.
IT WAS THE BEST TIME TO BE AN ONLY CHILD--
THE PINNACLE OF KID EXISTENCE--
--A WILD FRENZY OF KIDDIE GREED.
BUT THEN IT WOULD BE OVER.
THAT'S WHERE THE SIMILARITIES END
MAN. GOTTA TAKE A WALK OR SOMETHING.
CCHH
ALL I COULD DO WAS COLLAPSE--THEN SLEEP ALL DAY.

CARE IS HEAVY,
SLEEP. THE BEST THING THAT NEVER HAPPENED TO ME.
HAVEN'T SLEPT IN YEARS
THEREFORE SLEEP YOU,
I LIVE MY DREAMS... WRITE MY OWN TICKET
EXPERIENCE EVERY SECOND. NOT A WASTED MOMENT.
YOU ARE CARE AND
OW...
CHICK SCRATCHED ME
CARE MUST KEEP YOU...


NO CALL FOR THAT. I D DN'T HIT HER.
SLEEP PRETTY WANTONS, DO NOT CRY,
OOPS. .DAMMIT. . T'S JUST THE PHONE.
KILLED HER, MAYBE. NEVER HIT HER.
RRRNG
RRRNG
AND I WILL SING A LULLABY,
..THAT'S EVERYTHING. I'M OUTTA HERE.
RRRNG
RRRNG
FLINCHING LIKE A CHERRY... COTTON BALLS EVERYWHERE...
ROCK THEM, ROCK THEM, LULLABY

...SO THIS WIDOW, SEE, SHE'S IN MEXICO ON VACATION...
AGAIN W.TH THIS STORY! I'LL GET THE PHONE.
RRING
HOMICIDE
AND SHE'S LONELY, R GHT? SO SHE BUYS A "GENUINE MEXICAN CHIHUAHUA."
LORD, I HATE THEM DOGS!
BUT 'CAUSE OF BORDER LAWS, SHE HAS TO SMUGGLE IT BACK HOME--
HOMICIDE. DETECTIVE BAINES...
SHE GETS IT HOME ...TAKES IT IN FOR SHOTS.
THE VET LOOKS AT IT--AND GET THIS --IT'S A RAT!
PLEASE! THAT STORY'S OLDER'N MY GRANDMA.
T WAS MY EX'S GREAT AUNT!
YEAH. RIGHT--
"--THAT'S AN URBAN LEGEND, LAZARUS...I BET YOU OR YOUR EX NEVER EVEN SEEN THAT AUNT..."
BAR
The Choking DOBERMAN

"--NOBODY EVER KNOWS THE PEOPLE IN THOSE STORIES."
"JUST LIKE THE LOVER'S LANE 'HOOK KILLER'--"
"OR THE HITCHHIKING 'GRANDMA' WHO'S REALLY AN AXE MURDERER..."
"HOLD UP, REV--"
--THEY FOUND ANOTHER BODY--
"--IN MIDTOWN."
WEEEEEEEE
GUESS I'LL GET SOME COFFEE AT THE WAFFLE IRON. MORE CAFFEINE--JUST WHAT I NEED."

SIRENS WAILING IN THE NIGHT --COOL EFFECT. REAL URBAN.
THE MOBLEY HOTEL
WAFFLE IRON
WEEEEEEEE
LEAST I WON'T HAVE TO FIGHT COPS FOR A TABLE.
DAMN, WHAT AN UGLY DOG.
WAFFLE IRON
HER PET AIN'T NO PRIZE NEITHER.
CONTINUED SOON...

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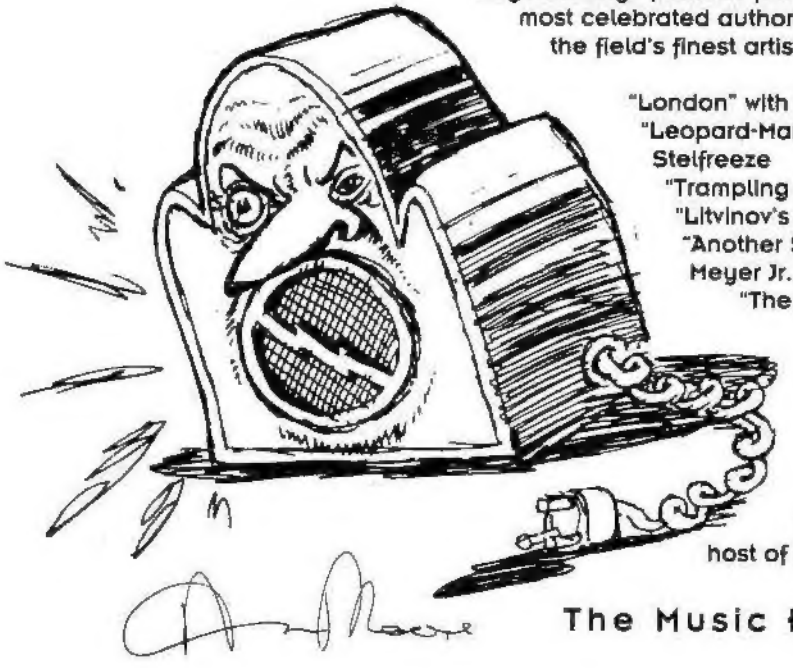
BEGINNING IN NEGATIVE BURN #9!

THE ALAN MOORE SONGBOOK!



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"The Murders of the Rue Morgue" with Neil Gaiman
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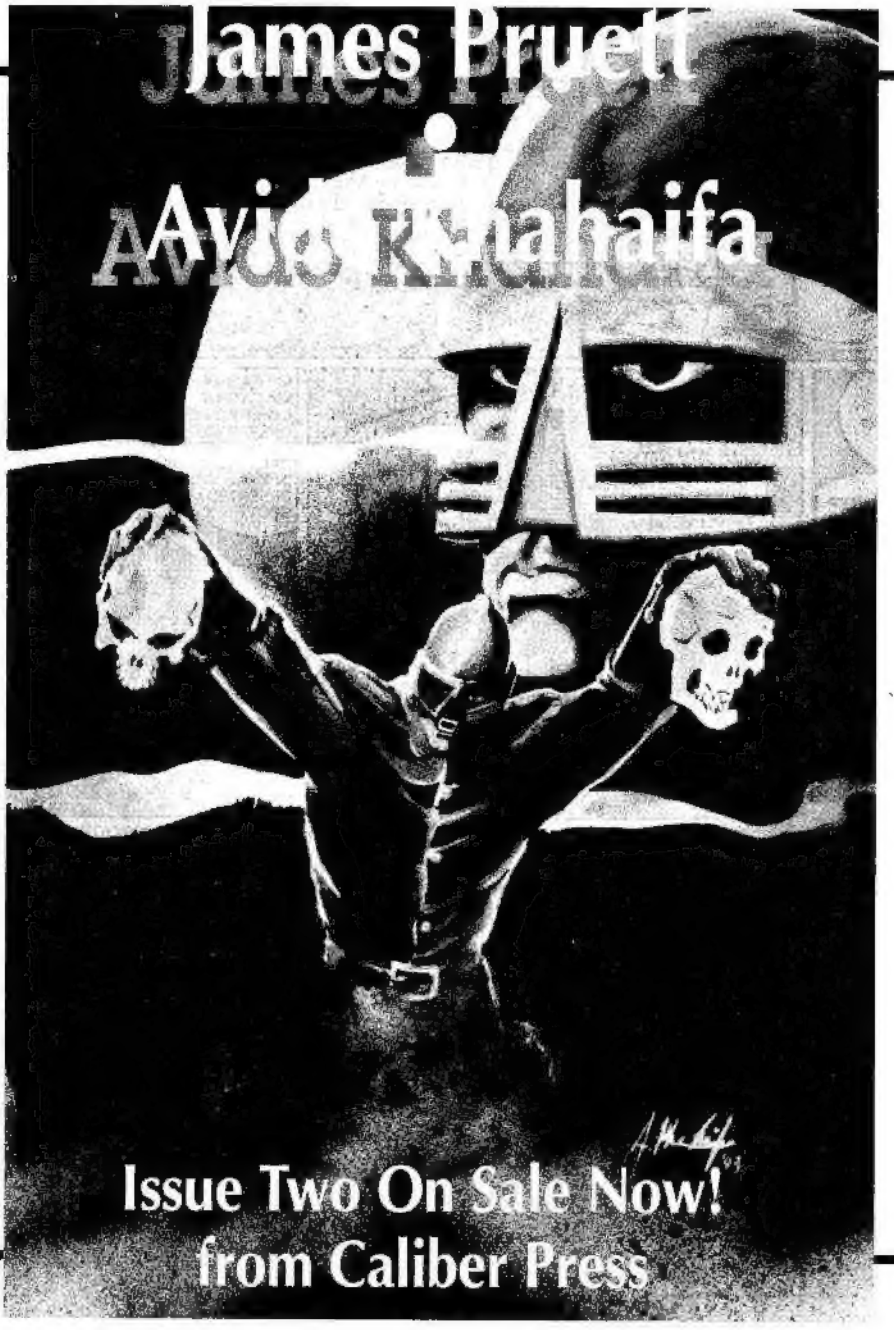
and more to be announced with illustrations by Tim Bradstreet, James A. Owen, Colleen Doran, Phillip Hester, and a host of others!

The Music Begins In March!

BLACK MIST



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a Mad Hatter Studios International production

THE ERLKING
R. CRAIG RUSSELL '93
WHO RIDES SO LATE THROUGH NIGHT AND WIND?
IT IS THE FATHER WITH HIS CHILD
HE HOLDS THE BOY IN HIS ARMS,
HE CLASPS HIM FIRMLY, HE KEEPS HIM WARM.
MY SON, WHY DO YOU HIDE YOUR FACE SO FEARFULLY?
FATHER, DON'T YOU SEE THE ERL-KING? THE ERL-KING WITH HIS CROWN AND TRAIN?
MY SON IT IS A PATCH OF MIST.
COME, DEAR CHILD, GO WITH ME! I WILL PLAY BEAUTIFUL GAMES WITH YOU; MANY ARE THE BRIGHT FLOWERS ON THE SHORE, MY MOTHER HAS MANY ROBES OF GOLD.
MY FATHER, MY FATHER, AND DO YOU NOT HEAR WHAT ERL-KING SOFTLY PROMISES ME?
BE CALM, KEEP CALM, MY CHILD; IN DRY LEAVES THE WIND IS RUSTLING.
WILL YOU GO WITH ME BRAVE BOY? MY DAUGHTERS SHALL TEND YOU NICELY.
MY DAUGHTERS WILL LEAD THE DANCING EACH NIGHT AND WILL LULL AND DANCE AND SING FOR YOU.
MY FATHER, MY FATHER, DON'T YOU SEE OVER THERE, ERL-KING'S DAUGHTERS IN THAT DESERTED SPOT?
MY SON, MY SON, I SEE IT PERFECTLY, THE OLD WILLOWS LOOK SO GREY.
I LOVE YOU, AM CHARMED BY YOUR GOOD LOOKS, AND IF YOU AREN'T WILLING ...
I SHALL HAVE TO USE FORCE.
MY FATHER, MY FATHER, HE'S CLUTCHING ME NOW!
ERL-KING HAS HURT ME!
THE FATHER SHUDDERS, HE RIDES APACE; IN HIS ARMS HE HOLDS THE GROANING CHILD
SWEATING AND STRAINING HE REACHES THE COURTYARD;
IN HIS ARMS THE CHILD LAY DEAD.